

past as in later

But the moral ~~and~~ ~~implications~~

As in documents of the later years, the internal clarity with which the probable indecisiveness of the chosen interventions ~~was~~ ^{is} ~~portrayed~~ ^(in this period) ~~in the '40's & '50's~~ fastened responsibility for the ensuing bloody stalemate and subsequent "crisis" ~~was~~ heavily upon the Presidents. Why each President exercised responsibility as he did, all in such similar fashion, is less clear; that is what this book is about. But the moral implications of their choices are never more evident than in the documents of this earliest period.

"You must understand," Hoang Van Chi had told me in the spring of '69, "that in the eyes of all Vietnamese, we gained our independence in March, 1945 [when the Japanese interned all the French and the Emperor Bao Dai proclaimed independence, six months' later abdicating formally to President Ho Chi Minh] and that the French set out to ^(in the North) re-conquer us (about two years later." ~~Less than five years into my personal involvement in Vietnam affairs,~~ ^{even then,} I scarcely knew what he was talking about. By the end of the summer I did; I recounted the story ^(not for their pleasure) to Americans ~~about~~ ^{in the works cited,} not for pleasure.

That ended, for me, in August and September, 1969,
Several things happened ^{when} ~~that~~, I read at least of
the origins of the war: not only in the Pentagon Papers
~~(which, in part, to~~ ^{consequently} ~~Volume I of the Beacon Press edition I have to~~
~~read of the)~~, but in books that Beaufre's comments
finally provoked me to read, ^{*} ~~some of~~ ^{recently}
~~available in English.~~ ^{*} ~~The~~ ^{well-known} ~~For~~ ^{illustrated}

* In particular, John T. McIlwain's *Vietnam: The
Origins of Revolution* (Princeton, —) ~~I also,~~
and *The End of a War* by Jean Lacouture and
Philippe Devillers (^{Donald}); also see, Lancaster,
The Emancipation of French Indochina ().
There is little reading I could urge on Americans today
and ~~Bettenger~~, ~~I would urge readers to study the~~
~~more pertinent to current United States policy than the first two of~~
~~first two of these, along with Volume I of the Beacon~~
~~Press edition of the Pentagon Papers.~~

conceptual time, reflection on these origins ~~with~~
of an ~~American policy~~ ^{new} ~~now~~ ^{revealed} as essentially continuous
from 1950, ~~if not~~ 1946, ~~that the~~ ~~that~~ ~~shifts~~
in 1954 ~~appearing as well the tactical~~ ~~of~~ ~~Presidential~~
~~patterns~~ ^{new} ~~of~~ ^{notions} led to the understanding of
and patterns of policy-making ^{patterns} ~~now~~ ^{revealed} to have
appeared ~~as early as~~ as early as 1946-50 — that underlies
all
~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~subsequently~~ — within essays in this book.

~~But~~

In that reading, two quotations stand out ~~as~~
as ~~historical~~ epigraphs to the whole of the Pentagon
Papers. One is by Ho Chi Minh, cited by McAlister
cited by McAlister; ~~just~~ ~~then~~ it is Ho Chi Minh
speaking to Jean Sainteny in the spring of 1946 in
France, at the close of negotiations in which
Ho had received ~~the~~ full honors as a Head of State,
but no assurance ~~that~~ the French would honor
their written accords signed in March (by Sainteny,
for France) promising to abide by a referendum.

"You must give me something to go back with.... If it comes to a fight, we will fight. You will kill ~~one~~^{ten} of us, and we will kill one of you. And in the end it is you ^{that} will die."

Taken over ^(adopted) "enemy." But in ^(one of our own) internal memoranda
drawn at the end of that year, ~~an~~ official ^{forecast} ~~was~~
is no less chilling ~~in its clarity~~. Four days earlier,
On 19 December 1946, fighting had broken out in the
outskirts of Hanoi, and the Viet Minh officials
were conducting a scorched-earth withdrawal. A
month after ~~Hanoi was shelled~~ ^{the French}
"incident" in which French warships had shelled
Haiphong, killing ^{over} 6000 civilians, the French ^{were now beginning} ~~now began~~
their attempt at the ^{military} reconquest of ^{the former colony.} ~~Indochina~~
—almost unique in the postwar world—

McAlister, op. cit., p. ———; quoting Sanitizing ———

Four days later, on December 23, 1946, a
1, ~~the~~ news on these events by John Carter Vincent,
Director of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, to
Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, ^{made} ~~stated~~ this
~~paragraph~~ assessment [p. 29, Vol. I, The Pentagon Papers,
Beacon Press]:

11

quote:

11

(New page)

More recently, a few days before Christmas, 1971, an article on the Op Ed page of the New York Times* described ~~the~~ what Fred Branfman has called "the Third Indochina War": the war of ^{air-dropped} sensors, ^{mines} and bombers, the "automated, electronic battlefield" ^(above Indochina) that has ^{largely} replaced the war of American ground offensives ^{at the old rate of} and American casualties ^{now at a less than one to ten.}

* "Sensors Don't Bleed," Herbert Mitgang, The New York Times, 20 December 1971, p. 35.

But on the front page on the same day, a slightly ominous note: a story headed "Hanoi Challenges Air Power of U.S.," beginning, "The American air war in Indochina has entered a new phase, with direct confrontations between American and North Vietnamese planes." All this ~~was~~ other story (in the previous two days, four U.S. planes had been downed over Laos and North Vietnam; ^{later the day after Christmas,} ~~a week later,~~ in the heaviest raids since 1968,

the President launched U.S. bombing for five days against North Vietnam, [↓]) * ^(fn) I was reminded of Christmas Eve, 1964, when I was called by the USA Duty Officer in the Pentagon with the news that the Brinks' BOQ had been blown up in Saigon ^("by persons unknown") and that Ambassador Taylor, ^{CINCPAC} and the JCS ^{all} recommended a one-day mission in "reprimand" by 40 strike aircraft

~~262~~ against the Vit Jhu die Ang barracks ~~and~~ (see
p. 263, Vol. III, Pentagon Papers) but the President
decided, so my boss told me, not to present the
American public with that Christmas surprise the
next ~~morning~~ on Christmas morning. The ^{air} bombing campaign
against the North did not start till for another six
weeks. §

The Times' ~~story~~ ^{report on this "new phase"} concludes:

"One young pilot in Danang summed up
his experience this way: 'We keep on bombing
and we keep underestimating how ingenious an
enemy we're up against. When we try something,
he develops counter-tactics, and it just never ends.'"

The date ^(of this story is) ~~was~~ Saigon, December 19, 1971.

The twenty-fifth anniversary day of the Indochina War.

If there is one lesson of the Pentagon Papers, it
is that there has ~~not~~ been no First and Second Indochina
Wars, ^{no Third Wars yet} ~~no Third~~ = just one war, for a
quarter of a century. ~~Not a civil war, but~~ ^{always} basically
a practical thing, it has ^{always} been an American war; a war
of Vietnam ~~but~~ all of the ^{but} ~~just~~ enough ~~against~~
American policy, ^{at} American financing, ^(proxy troops) and ~~several~~
firepower, almost from its beginning. ^{It} Since at least
the late-Forties there has ^{probably} ~~never~~ been a year when
political violence in Vietnam would have needed or
stayed at the scale of a "war", had not the U.S.

President, Congress and citizens fueled it with money, weapons and ultimately manpower: first through ~~promises~~, the French, and then wholly-owned client regimes, and at least directly.

A subsidiary lesson of the Papers — that the official interpretation of the North Vietnamese role as "aggression from the North" is ludicrous, along with the other ~~to~~ official notion that the Geneva Accords created formally created "two new

The ^{popular} notion ^{we have} ^{"interfered"} ~~that the conflict is~~ ^{in what} "really a civil war" —
— long privately held by many ^{bureaucrats} ~~officials~~ as pledge to themselves of the secret realigning emerges as much of a myth as the official "aggression from the North". To call a conflict in which one army is financed and equipped entirely by foreigners a "civil war" ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~one more cover and deception obscuring~~ ^{screen} obscuring a more painful reality: that the war is, after all, aggression. ^{Our aggression.} ~~It was that and is~~ ^{our} ~~unjustified, violent intervention, unwanted by most of those of south nation and culture, to assert responsibility for the decision who should govern~~ ^{how they should live,} ~~and who should live.~~ ^{Our role} ~~That~~ ^{he} ~~has~~ ^{has} defied the UN Charter from the beginning, and defied our international assurance at Geneva ^{technical} since 1954. In the language of Nuremberg-American language ratified by the U.N. in 1951 — it is a crime against the peace.

7

I had, of course, heard all these words before:
and dismissed them, as my colleagues did, as overblown,
"extremist rhetoric." It was what "radical" critics
^(about the nature of our involvement)
had been saying for years. I had not believed
them. Now I had to. ^{*}It did not follow that this
explanation of the causes of our behavior was wholly
correct. ^{*} ~~But~~ ^{for example}, lacking access to internal
documents, they ~~no more tried to say the~~ ~~the~~ ~~no more~~
~~than other "outsiders"~~ ^{did not} ^(what I read as) to guess at the critical Presidential
role, and they placed heavy emphasis on official
statements about U.S. economic interests in Southeast
Asia from the mid-Fifties that had disappeared from neither
internal rationales, at least, by the 'Sixties.

INSERT X here.

~~But the explanation of~~
For me, in the late summer of 1969, did ever since,
1 To read about the origins of the conflict, ^{in our own official documents,} and our
participation, was to see our role stripped naked
of any ^{shed} ~~scrap~~ of legitimacy. That applied, ^{just} as strongly to our
deliberately prolonging it, by a single additional day, or bomb, or
death. ~~though there could be no practical doubt that~~
~~there would be any~~ Can it ever be "precipitate" to
end a generation of ^{official} murder?

> quite does on: majority of U.S.

X X X